

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6547

DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 1210

USIA FOR VOA, IPS, INA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OVIP (SIMON, WILLIAM E), SY, US

SUBJ: SECRETARY SIMON'S DAMASCUS ARRIVAL STATEMENT

QUESTION: MR. SECRETARY, DO YOU HAVE AN AIRPORT STATEMENT?

SIMON: I'M JUST DELIGHTED TO BE HERE, ALTHOUGH ENTIRELY TOO BRIEFLY. THIS, AS YOU KNOW, IS THE FIRST VISIT OF A SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY OF THE UNITED STATES IN HISTORY TO THIS GREAT COUNTRY. I LOOK FORWARD TO MY MEETING WITH THE OFFICIALS OF THIS GOVERNMENT AND MOST ESPECIALLY WITH PRESIDENT ASAD AND THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER.

MY TRIP TO THE MIDDLE EAST IS A REAFFIRMATION OF THE UNITED STATE DETERMINATION TO SECURE A JUST AND LASTING PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND TO SECURE CLOSER ECONOMIC TIES WITH ALL COUNTRIES OF THIS AREA. I INTEND TO TELL THE OFFICIALS OF THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT TODAY OF OUR STRONG PERSONAL UNCLASSIFIED

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DESIRE TO ASSIST THEM IN ANY WAY WE POSSIBLY CAN

TO HAVE CLOSER ECONOMIC TIES BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES
AND TO ASSIST THEM IN THEIR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
WHICH IS SO CRITICAL. I'M SORRY, AS I SAID AT THE
OUTSET, THAT MY VISIT IS GOING TO BE COMPARATIVELY
BRIEF AND I HOPE YOU WILL FORGIVE ME, MR. MINISTER
(ECONOMIC MINISTER IMADI), AND AT THE SAME TIME GIVE
ME A RAIN-CHECK TO STAY LONGER. THANK YOU.

QUESTION: MR. SECRETARY, ARE YOU CARRYING ANY SPECIFIC
IDEAS, EITHER ECONOMIC OR POLITICAL?

SIMON: WE HAVE HAD -- (CHANGE OF THOUGHT)... OF COURSE
THE POLITICAL ARENA IS NOT WHAT THE FINANCE MINISTER
DOES, FORTUNATELY, IN THE UNITED STATES, BUT WE'RE
GOING TO HAVE HOPEFULLY WITHIN THE CONSTRAINTS
OF TIME, WIDE-RANGING DISCUSSIONS IN THE AREA OF
ECONOMICS AND FINANCE, BROADLY EXPLORATORY IN NATURE,
ALTHOUGH WE'LL HAVE SPECIFIC DISCUSSIONS AS TO HOW,
INDEED, THE U.S. CAN ASSIST IN BRINGING SYRIA AND THE
U.S. CLOSER TOGETHER. AND THAT IS IMPORTANT. INVEST-
MENT IN THIS COUNTRY IS IMPORTANT AND WE MUST DISCUSS
HOW CAN WE ENCOURAGE INVESTMENT FROM OUR PRIVATE
SECTOR WHICH IS THE GENIUS OF THE U.S. ECONOMY--THE
FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM. PRIVATE BUSINESS MUST BE
ATTRACTED TO COME OVER HERE AND INVEST BECAUSE IT
IS ONLY THROUGH INVESTMENT THAT WE CAN SEE INCREASED
PRODUCTIVITY AND ONLY INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY WILL
INCREASE THE STANDARD OF LIVING OF YOUR PEOPLE, WHICH
IS WHAT WE ALL DESIRE.

QUESTION: IS THERE A PLAN TO BALANCE, I WOULD SAY,
THE AMOUNT OF AID BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE ARAB COUNTRIES?

SIMON: WELL, OF COURSE, OUR AID PROGRAMS ARE NATURALLY
SUBJECT TO CONGRESSIONAL LEGISLATION AND SUBJECT TO
DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL AND FOREIGN
POLICY CONSIDERATIONS. THAT IS THE WAY IT IS DETERMINED IN
THE U.S. WE HAVE RENEWED OUR ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH
SYRIA ONLY A YEAR AND A HALF AGO. IT MUST TAKE TIME.
A TREE DOESN'T GROW TO THE SKY OVERNIGHT AND WE MUST
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WORK HARD, IN GOODWILL AND FRIENDSHIP TO BUILD THESE
RELATIONSHIPS...AND THEY WILL GROW OVER TIME.
MURPHY

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